

# ASSOCIATION BETWEEN AN UNHEALTHY LIFESTYLE AND OTHER FACTORS WITH HYPERTENSION AMONG HILL TRIBE POPULATIONS OF MAE FAH LUANG DISTRICT, CHIANG RAI PROVINCE, THAILAND

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**Abstract.** An unhealthy lifestyle may lead to hypertension which can cause strokes and cardiovascular disease. The aim of this study was to identify the specific unhealthy lifestyle practices which could cause hypertension among hill tribe populations in Mae Fah Luang District of Chiang Rai Province, Thailand. In 2006, 196 patients with hypertension were selected from 2 district hospitals and 13 health centers as cases, and 196 normotensive subjects from a local neighborhood were chosen as controls. Trained health personnel collected data by interviewing subjects from both groups regarding unhealthy lifestyles and other factors. All participants had a physical examination at the time of interview. The results from multiple logistic regression analysis show the factors associated with hypertension among the hill tribe people studied were smoking (OR 2.48; 95%CI 1.43-4.30,  $p = 0.001$ ), no or irregular exercise (OR 1.84; 95%CI 1.16-2.99,  $p = 0.005$ ), being overweight (OR 2.96; 95%CI 1.69-5.18,  $p < 0.002$ ), having obesity (OR 2.65, 95%CI 1.04-6.73,  $p < 0.018$ ) and having a high frequency intake of fatty foods (OR 1.98, 95%CI 1.23-3.18,  $p < 0.013$ ). The findings suggest the need for significant lifestyle changes in regards to smoking, eating habits and leisure time exercise programs. The adoption of such lifestyle changes would result in a reduced chance of being hypertensive, which could later reduce cardiovascular morbidity and mortality.

**Key words:** unhealthy lifestyle, hypertension, hill tribe population, Thailand

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